

# HANDSOME HARRY

## Stories of Land and Sea.

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## HANDSOME HARRY

### OF THE FIGHTING BELVEDERE.

BY J. G. BRADLEY.

#### CHAPTER I.

SAMSON.

"Come out of the way there, will you?"

These polite words were addressed by Mr. William Grunt, boatswain of the Belvedere, to a tall, powerful negro, lying on his back by the binnacle. The sky was blue and the sun was sending down rays strong enough to scorch and blister any skin except that belonging to a son of Africa. Negroes, however, are salamanders in their way, and the one lying on the deck of the Belvedere seemed to enjoy his position tremendously.

The only notice he took of the boatswain's request was by opening one eye leisurely and closing it again, as if that exertion was too much for him.

"Now, Samson," continued Mr. Grunt (more familiarly known as Bill Grunt, or Old Bill), "I've asked you politely to take your thundering carcass out of the gangway, and now I gives you a fair opportunity to do it. One—two!"

Samson opened the other eye and rolled over about twice.

"Dat do, Massa Grunt?" he asked.

"Confound you, no!" roared the boatswain, feeling in his pocket for a trifling weapon he kept there in the way of a piece of knotted rope. "I want you to get out of the gangway altogether."

"'Altogedder?" repeated Samson, struggling into a sitting posture.

"Yes, altogether, you lump of—of lico-

rice," said Mr. Grunt. "Ain't we got wisitors comin' aboard, and do you think we want a carcass like yours lying about the deck? Get up."

"Ain't I gettin' up, Massa Grunt?" said Samson, mildly, as he tucked his feet under him, preparatory to assuming an erect position. "Massa Grunt allus is in such a berry much hurry."

Still Samson did not rise, and Mr. Grunt, fairly driven into a state of exasperation, gave him a cut across the back with a rope. The eyes of the negro flashed fire.

"Massa Grunt," he said, "me no like dat."

"Perhaps you will like that a little better," said the boatswain, giving him another.

The negro sprang up and seized the boatswain's arm with a grip which made him wince. Bill Grunt was a powerful man, but he was no match for the negro.

"You do dat again," said Samson.

"I'll do it again," replied the boatswain, sturdily, "if you don't obey orders. It's my opinion that the cap'n makes a fool of you; but he's young, and——"

"Mind you don't commit yourself, Grunt," said a quiet voice close beside him, and, the boatswain turning, beheld a handsome young fellow near him, dressed in the easy costume of a sailor—shirt, trousers, and cap. There was nothing in him to lead any one to suppose that he was more than an ordinary sailor, except his figure and look. The first was of splendid mold—tall, lithe, and muscular; and the second bespoke a habit of



command. He was captain of the Belvedere, but who he was neither the officers nor men knew. They called him Cap'n Harry to his face, and Handsome Harry behind his back. What the Belvedere was we shall presently see.

"I never permit wrangling here," said our hero, sternly.

"Axing your pardon, sir," returned Bill Grunt, humbly, "but there warn't no wrangle as far as I was concerned."

"But I saw you strike Samson?"

"The blessed nigger would not get up when I axed him."

"Then report him to me. I cannot have you or any other man take the law out of my hands. When you joined it was with the understanding that I was to be absolutely master here."

"I signed articles so fur," assented Bill Grunt.

"You were to be obedient in all things, to ask no questions, and go with the Belvedere whithersoever I might choose to take it?"

"That's the truth, sir, and I'm still willin'. It's an uncommon jolly life."

"Then let me have no more rope business without you receive instructions from me. It is an old habit, and very well on a government ship, but not suitable for the life of liberty we lead. Throw it overboard."

"Throw it overboard, sir!" exclaimed the boatswain, aghast.

"Yes. Over with it at once!"

Mr. William Grunt cast a tearful eye upon his old friend, and then with a sudden wrench, as if the parting cost him more than his life, cast the weapon into the sea. He watched the splash it made and the circles which followed on the even surface of the sea with the melancholy air of a man who loses somebody or something very dear to him.

"I've had him eleven years," he said, "and he's seen good service."

"Perhaps so," replied our hero, dryly. "Samson, come with me."

He went below, followed by the negro, into his cabin, and, taking a seat, looked for several moments sternly at the somnolescent Samson.

"You must be as obedient as the rest, Samson," he said at last.

"Massa Cap'n Harry," replied Samson, "I only too glad to be so."

"But you are not. Obedient to me you are, but not to my officers."

"Massa Harry, I lib and die for you."

"Well, Samson," said the handsome young fellow, melting a little, "suppose you are true and faithful to me."

"Ax dis chile to go right out ob dis cabin, and right up to de deck dere, and pitch himself right orf into de sea, and dis chile 'll do it," returned Samson, fervently. "Oh, Massa Harry, I berry much detached to you."

"Attached, I hope you mean," returned Harry, smiling; "but there, go on deck and let me know when my friends are coming."

Making a low salaam, which almost brought his knees to his nose, Samson went out, and Handsome Harry was left alone.

Left to himself, a change came over the young captain of the Belvedere. The smile which had played about his face during his interview with Samson died out, and in its place there came a look of settled determination.

"No letters—no news," he murmured, "and therefore for a time no hope! But why should I care?—why grieve over the inevitable? Outcast as I am from my own country, banned by men who ought to be my friends, scouted by all I ever held dear, the beauty and pleasure of life is not lost to me. Have I not freedom? Yes, but not the freedom I would have—for am I not hunted? Is there not a price set upon my head? Well, I wish no harm to the man who can capture me. The Belvedere will stand her ground when our foes are anything like equal, but when the odds are out of all reason, we can show them a clean pair of heels. Who's there?"

The door of the cabin shook a little, as if somebody had pushed or fallen against it. Receiving no answer, he opened the door and looked out.

"Merely a puff of wind," he said, closing it again. "Let me have a look at the barometer."



CHAPTER II.

OFF AND AWAY.

He looked at it and saw that the mercury had fallen a little, and going to the porthole of his cabin, peeped out.

"Storm coming," he said; "not a good two hours away; yet time enough for me to have a peep at Juanita. Come in."

This time somebody really knocked, and Samson showed a black face gleaming with teeth.

"Spanish gen'leman and lubly lady comin', massa," he said, "jis' a-comin' up the gangway."

The captain of the *Belvedere* hurried up just in time to give a helping hand to a lovely Spanish girl, who was tripping lightly from the gangway. She was not more than seventeen, with a small face, perfect in its beauty, mouth rosy, nose small, eyes that looked through a man and "reg'lar fixed him," as Bill Grunt said, who was perhaps the least impressionable man in the wide world.

"Welcome on board the *Belvedere*," said the young captain, lightly pressing her small hand.

"So very glad to see me, eh, Sir Flatterer?" returned the lady, smiling.

"More than glad—lifted above the world by your sweet presence."

"Is there nobody coming to help me?" squeaked a querulous voice from the ship's side. "Juanita, call Captain Harry."

"Samson," said Harry, addressing the negro, "help Don Salvo aboard."

Samson disappeared in one moment, and returned in the next with a small, weazened old man, who was as little like his offspring, Juanita, as a chimpanzee is like the statue of the Greek slave.

"Dear me, dear me," snarled the old man, "it seems to me that whenever I go out with you, Juanita, I am always left behind."

"You will be left behind altogether one day, old man," growled Bill Grunt to himself.

"Pray pardon the omission, Don Salvo," said Harry, bowing. "We English have not the instinctive courtesy of your more refined nation. Pray come into my cabin; and, Samson, tell cook to serve the luncheon."

"I hate the sea," said Don Salvo, as he took a seat in the cabin; "it is so much like a woman, you never know how to trust it—one moment quiet, and the next spitting fire like a volcano. This morning it was as smooth as a mirror, and I promised myself a pleasant day; but, as soon as I get upon it, up comes the beastly waves. Ugh! I cannot stand them!"

"We shall get nothing more than a swell for the next two hours," replied Harry.

"As if a swell was not bad enough," snarled the Spaniard.

The arrival of luncheon put an end to the growlings of the old man, who was a great epicure. As dish after dish was set upon the table, his bilious eyes rolled about in a gloating style, and he hastened to a seat at once; Handsome Harry handed Juanita to a chair, and stationed himself beside her.

The don proceeded to help himself without ceremony, and, having assisted Juanita to something, filled a glass of wine.

"You live well on board here," said Don Salvo, as his eyes roamed over the dishes on the table.

"Without guests," replied our hero, "I prefer a more humble fare."

"You are eating nothing now."

"I have no appetite."

"Poor boy!" whispered Juanita, turning upon him her laughing eyes; "as bad as that?"

"Not love-lorn, I assure you," answered Harry, a little scornfully; "I am not a milk-sop. I love like a man; but I am troubled with thoughts to-day."

"Troubled with thoughts!" said the don, catching the last words. "Ah! so am I. I was thinking this morning that the *Belvedere* is very expensive."

"Then sell her," said Harry, quietly.

"No, no," answered the Spaniard, savagely; "not until its work is done! No, no! Have I not suffered?—and shall I not be avenged?"

"You shall, and I will be your avenger," replied Harry. "Not because I desire to be



an instrument of yours, but because your foe is mine, and also an enemy to all the world. The compact is perfectly fair—you risk your money, and I risk my life; more—if I fail, the loss falls on both also."

"You fail!" exclaimed Juanita, as if such a thing was an impossibility—and Harry's face flushed with pleasure. Don Salvo accepted the idea more coolly.

"Men like you seldom fail," he said. "Your bravery and coolness render your youth of no account. You are born to succeed. No man with eyes in his head and a brain behind them would doubt it for a moment."

"I will try," replied our hero, simply; and nothing more of importance was spoken during luncheon.

Two of the seamen cleared away, assisted by Samson, who did his part by looking on, and sniffing the fragrance of each dish as it passed by. When the table was cleared, Juanita went on deck, and the two men were left alone.

"Now to business," said Harry.

"All in good time," returned the Spaniard.

"There is not much time to spare," said our hero. "In an hour there will be a heavy sea, one which will make light work of your cock-boat. Unless you wish to remain on board, come to business at once."

"What do you want?" groaned the Spaniard.

"A thousand pounds."

"So much?"

"Yes. There are stores to procure, and new ropes and sails, as soon as we touch at a convenient place."

"But I think we might procure——"

"Nothing here, Don Salvo. Fertaleza, in South America, is scarcely the place for ship's stores. You knew what I wanted—have you brought it? Yes or no?"

"I have brought something," began the don.

"Have you brought what I want?"

"I—I—think not."

"Then remain here and take charge of the Belvedere, for I have done with it," said our hero, angrily. "What is the meaning of this parsimony? Have I not within the past six months brought you heaps of gold and jew-

els, fully the value of this craft, if you did not cheat me? Now hearken: I will be plain with you. The gold I want is a loan, and no more. It will be paid back with interest."

"Aye, aye!"

"But understand me still further," pursued the young captain—"with or without you, I can carry out my purpose; that I have means at my command which I do not care to touch, unless I am compelled. You may have the Belvedere if you will, but tomorrow I would have another afloat. The crew is mine, and would follow."

"Enough—enough," cried Don Salvo; "no more. I have the gold within my coat."

"A heavy burden for so old a man!"

"But a pleasant one," grinned the Spaniard. "We should groan beneath a burden of stone, while we lightly carry the same weight in gold. Dear me, how the ship heaves!"

"The wind is rising," said our hero. "It is time you returned to the shore."

"You are in haste."

"Not at all," replied our hero, thinking of Juanita. "Stay if you will, but you must go to sea with us, as I weigh anchor as soon as our friend, Tom True, comes on board."

"Is that his real name?"

"Tom True and True Tom alike," said Handsome Harry; "noble, brave, and upright. If he bears another, it is no business of either yours or mine."

"No, no. How the ship shakes!"

"A heavy sea has struck her. Go ashore."

The Spaniard cast one longing look upon the gold he had laid upon the table, and with slow and careful step ascended the gangway. On deck he found Juanita conversing with Samson, who was rolling his eyes and showing his grinders extensively in recognition of her affability.

"We must return to the shore, daughter," said Don Salvo.

"Good-by," she said, giving her hand to Harry, "and remember!"

"I can never forget," he answered, bowing low.

The boat alongside was in the care of three half-castes, two of whom rowed and



the third steered. Handsome Harry looked at these men as he handed Juanita in.

"Do you want three men, Salvo?" he asked.

"Yes; they are my body-guard," replied the Spaniard. "Why?"

"I am a little short-handed, and they look like fellows who would fight."

"They would—but I do not think I can spare them."

"I think you can."

Don Salvo paused a moment, and then said something to the three men, who nodded in reply.

"They will come," he said, "and I will send them back with the boat that belongs to you, with this Tom True, or True Tom—which is it?"

"What matters?" said the captain of the Belvedere. "You will be just in time to catch him. I am indebted to you for the loan of these men."

"You will have occasion to remember my kindness," said the don, with a meaning look. "Farewell, my young friend."

The boat pushed off. Donna Juanita waved her hand, and her father, making preparations for any contingency which might arise from the roughness of the sea, bade the men pull with all haste.

"Nice ole gen'leman, sar," said Samson to his master.

"Yes," replied Harry. "Get me my glass; I want to have a look at the shore."

The Belvedere lay a good three miles off the land, and although the atmosphere was very clear, small objects could not be recognized.

Samson brought the glass, and Harry with it swept the shore.

Shortening the focus, he fixed it upon Don Salvo's boat, and feasted his eyes upon the donna's beauty until the craft ran aground, and one of the half-castes took her in his arms and carried her through the surf.

"He is not an ugly fellow," muttered Harry. "These people are handsome. Ah! here comes Tom. A very short parley between him and the don, and now he pushes off."

In due time Tom True stepped on board,

revealing the face of a true British sailor—nimble, muscular, sunburnt, and good-looking. Tom was about the age of his captain, perhaps a little older in years, but certainly younger in his ways.

Harry was serious and even melancholy at times, but Tom was always light-hearted, careless, and even reckless—doing the deed first, and reckoning up the consequence afterward. The men, in their private talk, called him Careless Tommy.

"Come aboard, sir," said Tom, reporting himself in true naval fashion.

"What news?" asked Harry.

"The rascal is not a hundred miles away—cruising about in a nor'-westerly direction, as far as I can make out. But all the information I got from a lubber, half-drunk with the filthy rum they sell at the gambling-shop."

"One of his crew?"

"Yes; the man said he was wounded, and they put him ashore on a lone point of the land, so as not to be troubled with any sick. Nice dodge, eh?"

"Worthy of the fellow who did it, Tom. How did the poor man get out of it?"

"Crawled along the coast, eating shell-fish and anything he could find, until he came to a shepherd's hut, and the shepherd nursed him. By the way, I've got three fellows in the boat—do you know anything about them?"

"Yes; we are rather short-handed."

"I don't like them."

"Why not, Tom?"

"Never liked a half-caste yet; but can't say why. Here, come up, you agreeable-looking scoundrels, and show yourselves!"

The three men, thus adjured, came up for inspection, and certainly there was room for Tom's dislike. The men were handsome enough, but their beauty was the beauty of the wild-cat or leopard, and their eyes, black and full, wandered about in a manner which bespoke spirits ill at rest.

"You speak English?" said Harry.

"Englese—a little," answered one.

"Your names?"

"Pedro, Baptista, and Jerome."

"Thank you," said our hero. "Then, Pedro, Baptista, and Jerome, remember that I



am master here. Obey me, and all will be well; disobey my commands, and say your last prayer at the same time, for you will have need of it!"

The significance of the speech was well understood by the men, probably from the fact of Harry having touched the butt of a pistol to give force to it. He waved his hand, and they walked away with the slumbering fires of passion in their eyes.

"Wild dogs," said Tom.

"I will tame them," said Harry.

"If any man will. Here comes the breeze."

"Up with the anchor and steer nor'-west."

A little description of the Belvedere may not be now out of place.

She was a long, low-built, rakish craft, such as sailors call "suspicious," and carried eight guns, placed in peculiar positions—three on each side, and one at the bow, and another at the stern—swivel guns.

There were about one hundred men on board, principally English, Irish and Scotch, a fair proportion of each doing service under the flag of Captain Harry. The few foreigners mingling with them were scarcely noticeable, the more so as they performed the menial offices of the ship.

The only officers on board were the captain, Tom True, first mate, and Bill Grunt, the boatswain. Samson considered himself an officer, but he did not fairly reckon as one. The commanding element was, therefore, limited, but the real command was more limited still, as it all lay in the youthful captain.

There was not a man on board who dared say "nay" to him. When he spoke they turned to obey as the machinery of an engine obeys the pressure of steam. If he raised his hand to strike it was no idle threat—the blow was given—but the hand was seldom raised in anger, and never without great provocation.

Who he was, or what he was, no man knew. All they knew was that he had called them together one by one, and bound them in a strange brotherhood, from which they could not, nor cared to escape from.

The inducements he offered were—

A life of wandering and adventure.

Double the usual pay of the navy and merchant service.

Excellent rations and leave when an opportunity offered.

In return for these he demanded blind and implicit obedience. They were to do as they were bid, to question nothing, and to risk even their lives in the cause of Handsome Harry of the Belvedere.

Sailors are proverbially superstitious and romantic. They have a reason to be so, for are they not constantly coming in contact with the strange and wonderful? They pass their lives in searching out the far corners of the earth and revealing the secrets of nature. What wonder, then, that a crew of good men mustered to follow the fortunes of Captain Harry.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE FIGHT IN THE STORM.

The mercury continued to fall and the wind to rise. While land was yet in sight to the watch of the Belvedere, great spots of luminous cloud were rising in the horizon.

The young captain watched them with interest, but with anxiety. He knew what was coming, and he knew the powers of endurance in his ship, and how to deal with the rising storm. Samson was weather-wise, too, and, standing at his master's elbow, ventured to give an opinion.

"Wind come quick," he said. "Tunder, lightning, and rain. Too much sail, Massa Harry."

"Thank you, Samson. We will shorten it. Send Mr. Grunt here."

Mr. Grunt was in the cuddy, when Samson went up and summoned him in the following polite style:

"I say, Ole Grunt, Massa Cap'n want you."

There was no time to argue out the right of Samson to address him in this way, for the orders of Captain Harry were imperative; so Mr. Grunt bottled his indignation, and went over to where our hero was standing.

"Take in all canvas and set storm-sail,"



said he. "There is no time to lose. The wind is coming down upon us like a raging lion."

"Aye, aye, sir."

"When that is done, come into my cabin for orders. Who is at the helm?"

"Travers, sir."

"A good man. You can leave him."

Sail was shortened, but not a moment too soon, for verily the wind came down upon the good ship like a wild beast, bearing upon its bosom great sheets of spray from the summit of the waves.

With the wind the clouds seemed to descend from the hidden heights, and hid the azure blue. The day, hitherto so bright and beautiful, turned suddenly to night.

A few brief moments, and all the elements were fairly at work—lightning, thunder, wind, and rain, amid waves and clouds commingled, hissing, shrieking, and roaring in wild tumult, and before it all fled the gallant Belvedere.

"A sharp storm, sir," said Bill Grunt, as he entered the captain's cabin, speaking at the top of his voice to make himself heard.

"Yes, Grunt. I want to ask you about the magazine."

"Aye, aye, sir; it's running rather short."

"Have we enough powder for an engagement?"

Bill Grunt turned his quid from the left cheek to the right, scratched his head, and, with the touch of the oracle in him, replied:

"Depends upon the sort of engagement. Now, if it is like the one we had with that Mexican vessel, why, there's enough, and to spare."

"Yes, I know," said Harry, impatiently; "the fellows would not, or could not fight, and one round settled them. But have we powder enough for tougher work?"

"I'm afeared not," replied the boatswain; "but we can get plenty two days' from here."

"Two days, Grunt, may be too late for the work I have in hand."

"Ah! then, sir, you had better not try to do the work."

"It must be done, if a chance offers," said the young hero, pacing up and down the

cabin; "our chance once lost, may be lost forever."

"But if you can't avail yourself on it," hinted Mr. Grunt.

"I must, and will. Is that anybody knocking at the door?"

"It's Mr. True," said the boatswain, opening it.

"Come in, Tom. Has anything happened?"

"A sail in sight."

"Where away?"

"About a mile to leeward."

"What is she like?"

"Ugly; and, as far as I can see by the lightning's flash, painted black, with a white line running round her hull."

"The Black Jaguar!" cried Harry, leaping up. "Bear down upon her, and clear the deck for action!"

"For action?" repeated Tom, aghast.

"Fight in a thunder-storm, sir?" cried Bill Grunt, with a dazed look.

"What matter, whether the storm rages or no?" cried the captain. "Follow me to the deck, and each man to his work. Beat to quarters, and, if there is a laggard, spare the enemy a task and shoot him!"

"There will be no laggard when Handsome Harry calls, even in this storm," muttered Bill Grunt, as he followed his leader above.

Once on deck, he made no attempt to muster the men with his pipe, the commotion of the storm was too great; but he bade one of the men on the watch pass the word below, and in a twinkling the deck was alive with men, all eager to do their captain's bidding.

The port-holes were opened, and the guns run out; the magazine opened, and powder and shot passed from hand to hand with the rapidity acquired by good discipline. The Belvedere behaved most gallantly, and rode upon the waves like a cork.

The ship which had given rise to this activity could be plainly seen about a mile to leeward, with her storm sails, running before the storm almost as gallantly as her pursuer. The almost incessant lightning darting hither and thither in the heavens revealed the dark hull with its white line, which Harry appeared to know so well.



Harry looked at his watch—it pointed to the hour of sunset, and there was, therefore, no chance of any more daylight—even if the storm subsided, the battle, if any took place, would be in the darkness of the night.

He and Tom True stood side by side, both ignoring every danger around them; the one from a heart inured to every kind of peril, the other because he did not think of it.

By dint of a deal of shouting they managed to exchange a few words.

"Does she carry a flag, Tom?"

"I can see none."

"Nor I—she is not likely to flourish her colors on such a night as this."

"Now she burns a blue light, and is signaling to us."

"Not to us, Tom. For there, see further in, another light burns."

"She has a consort."

"Then it cannot be the Black Jaguar, Tom, unless she has a prize with a crew on board."

"You've about hit it, Captain Harry."

"Call me Harry when alone," said our hero; "you and I can afford to be familiar. There is another blue light burning!"

"Let us burn one in answer, and puzzle him."

"A happy thought, Tom."

The order was given and the light was burned. The stranger, as if puzzled, burnt a third, and her head swung round a point or two as if she paused to take a look at the Belvedere.

"Wait a moment," muttered Tom, "and we will let you know who we are."

A wild gust of wind now swept by, and great sheets of sleet shut out the ships from each other.

When this cleared away the Belvedere and the stranger had lessened the gap between them.

"Ha!" said Harry, looking through his glass, "the fellow means business as well as we do. He is quite prepared. It must be the Black Jaguar."

"But still he keeps away, Harry."

"And wisely, too; for a fight in this sea will be rough work. Grunt?"

Grunt was handy—waiting for orders, in fact, and responded with a touch of his forelock.

"Is the bow gun ready?"

"No, sir."

"Put in a blank cartridge and signal to yon fellow to stop."

The boom of the gun rose above the storm, and its red flash turned the waves to blood. The stranger kept upon his way.

"A shot across his bows," was the next order.

"I'll send it very close," muttered Bill Grunt, "so that they can't make no mistake in this 'ere darkness. Now then!"

Aiming, of course, was difficult; but Bill was an old hand, and knew how to make a calculation. The shot sent a mass of additional spray over the forecastle of the stranger.

"There goes his answer!" exclaimed Harry.

A small ball ran up to the mast-head and unfolded; a flag floated before the wind.

"Black as night!" cried Tom True. "It is the Black Jaguar!"

A cry of exultation broke from the young captain's lips.

"At last," he cried, "the hour has come! and, villain, we shall meet hand to hand."

"Short of powder, sir," hinted Bill Grunt.

"But we are not short of pluck," returned his captain, "and that is better than all. Have the men their cutlasses?"

"Aye, aye, sir."

"And the grappling-irons—are they ready?"

"All ready, sir."

"What sail can we carry?"

"Not a stitch, sir."

"Clap on the foresails."

"She'll carry 'em clean under, sir."

"And set the mainsail."

"There's no going agin him," muttered the boatswain, and running forward, he gave orders for the work.

The men uttered a cheer, and, despite the leaping of the Belvedere before the storm, ran like cats into the rigging, and the mainsail fell out of its bed.

"Over we go," growled Bill Grunt; and in sober truth the Belvedere was thrown almost upon her beam-ends; but she righted, and, like a horse under the whip and spur, rushed madly on.



The stranger evidently saw this daring spreading of canvas, but dared not emulate it with such a wind, and in such a sea; but he put his helm up, so as to present his stern to the Belvedere.

This maneuver was hailed with a shout of derision from the men on board of our hero's craft, but every man had his eyes upon the bolt ropes of the mainsail, which were strained to their utmost.

"They can't stand long, sir," said Bill Grunt.

"If long enough to reach you fellow, it will be long enough for me."

This was all the answer vouchsafed him, and with it he was fain to be content. Nearer and nearer drew the Belvedere, and the faces of dark and swarthy men upon the stranger could be plainly seen.

"I know that breed of sailors," said Tom True to himself.

On and on, through the foaming sea, up upon great hills of water, and into great valleys of the sea went the Belvedere—now looking at the foe from an elevation, and then watching her rise upon a hill, and anon losing sight of her altogether. Thus they sped on, and the Belvedere drew nearer and nearer.

The pursued craft burned lights still, but they were changed from blue to red, and one after another was lighted with great rapidity. But there was no answer.

The rigging creaked and groaned, and the mainmast bent like a fishing-rod, but Harry looked upon it with fearlessness. Bill Grunt groaned in spirit.

"That mast will go overboard directly," he said.

"What dat you blubbering about?" asked Samson, who had been for some minutes standing quietly by his side, armed with cutlass and pistols for the fight.

"I say we shall lose that mast."

"You a berry great ass to set yourself up afore Massa Harry," said Samson, contemptuously; "you a berry great chuckle-head."

"If that mast don't go overboard, I'll eat it!" shouted Grunt.

"And if it do, I knock off dat head of yourn," said Samson.

Bill Grunt, being thus fixed up with something pleasant in either case, retired a few paces behind, and had his growl out alone.

A moment's lull in the storm now gave promise of better things, but the promise was not fulfilled. Again a fierce gust swept down, with a cloud of spray and rain, which once more hid pursued from pursuer.

But not for long; and when the mist had passed the two ships were side by side. On the deck of the Belvedere were its captain, eager and ready to grapple with the foe; Tom True, taking it as a matter of course; Bill Grunt, resigned to anything; Samson, waiting to follow his chief; and the crew in high spirits, uttering shouts of glee.

On the other, a heap of dark faces, with eyes that gleamed as brightly as the creases they held in their hands, and mouths drawn back with a snarl like wild beasts at bay.

Handsome Harry gave a signal, and the four starboard guns of the Belvedere vomited forth destruction and death. Four lanes were cut through the dark mass of foes, and an awful yell rent the air.

A moment's lull, and the enemy answered with six guns, very wildly aimed. Ten men of the Belvedere fell to rise no more. The rigging of the mainmast was cut away, and the mainmast came thundering down, burying beneath it half a score of men.

But this casualty only helped our hero, for it blocked the Belvedere alongside the foe, and a high wave carried the Belvedere down upon the other, and, with a crash, they closed.

"The grappling-irons," cried Harry.

They were ready, and in a trice the two vessels were bound together. In about the same time the men under the sail had cut themselves free with their cutlasses.

"Follow me, Belvederes!" cried the young captain.

"Here we are again," shrieked Tom True.

"Golly, dis chile be de fust ober!" cried Samson, and so he was—after his leader.

Bill Grunt, the mate, and the men, followed pell-mell, and the swarthy foe received them with a chorus of yells.

The lightning, which had hitherto illumined the sea and sky, suddenly ceased, and a terrible darkness fell upon the scene.



Friends could not be distinguished from foes, and, as if each and every man was guided by the same impulse, the fighting ceased.

No man cared to strike without knowing where the blow might fall.

But such inaction did not suit the captain of the *Belvedere*, and, flashing his pistol so as to get a sight of the foes, he dashed into their midst.

"He will be killed!" cried Tom True.

"Berry bad job for any man dat scratch him skin," growled Samson, and he followed his leader.

Bill Grunt flashed his pistol in imitation of his leader, and beheld the gallant Harry cutting right and left among the foe. He had quite a circle of dead and dying around him. Samson, a little to the right, was making a second ring of silent dead and howling living.

Tom True backed suddenly, and disappeared over the sides of the vessel to the *Belvedere*.

"Funked the fight, by Jupiter!" roared Bill Grunt. "Never thought Tom True was the man for that sort of thing. Follow me, men!—what matters whether we fight in the dark or in the light, lads, so as we do fight?"

But Tom True had not "funked the fight." His retirement had originated in something very different to fear. In a few seconds a blue light was burning, and Tom was seen to give the cook's mate—a crippled sailor with a wooden leg, and, therefore, unfit for boarding work—a box of lights to keep them burning.

Then once more he leaped upon the deck of the strange craft, and dashed into the thick of the fight.

What yells, what execrations befouled the air! Cutlasses gleamed like rippling water in the blue light, and the clash of steel was mingled with the report of pistols, each shot followed by a yell.

Handsome Harry, with lips set and eyes ever ready to catch the movements of a foe, cut here, and thrust there—each cut severing a life or limb, each thrust followed by a gaping wound. The half-castes shrank back from him with affright, and wheresoever he

turned, there was a vacant space in their ranks.

Apparently the foe had no leader, for they fought in a desperate hap-hazard way peculiar to mobs, and in vain did Harry look for some sign, in garb or mien, for a man superior to the mass.

The next object of terror to the half-castes was Samson, and they liked him none the less for his half jocular way of addressing whoever came in his way. The thunder had ceased and the wind had fallen, so his words could be plainly heard.

"What you come right in my way for, sar?" he cried, as he lopped off the head of a half-caste, who endeavored to duck under his arm. "Dat gest de way wid you fellows—allus whar you not wanted; and you, sar, cumin' and stickin' yourself on de point ob my cutlass like lilly pig for roasting. Now, den—what! anoder one! Well, sar, if you come dis way, you must 'specked to be made to wriggle. Now, den, sar, you must be big fool not to take warning by dem oder gen'lemen who put demselves into de wrong shop. If you put your nose dis way him sure to get tickled."

The last man addressed had endeavored to dodge the cut Samson aimed at him, and he so far succeeded as to escape with the loss of the tip of his nose. But the pain of that wound was, no doubt, excruciating, judging by the capers he cut and the howls he uttered.

The footing for the strongest combatants was not very secure, for the two ships, lashed together, rocked fearfully. The helmsmen had both abandoned their posts, and the *Belvedere* and its foe were at the mercy of the angry sea.

They broached to, and the big waves came tumbling over the sides, to the great confusion of all, and now was the time for Tom True to shine again.

He had been by the side of Harry during the past few moments, and now, seeing that unless something was done the salt water would settle the affairs of both, he said:

"Harry, I must get to the helm of this craft and put her before the wind. Now for a rush. We must get through them fellows somehow."



There was a line of savage faces in his way, and upon it Harry, Tom, and Samson, followed by a number of men, precipitated themselves. The three first got through, but the men were shut out.

"To the wheel, Tom!" cried Harry. "Samson and I will defend you."

"Right you are," replied Tom, cheerfully.

"Now, Samson, stand fast," said our hero.

"Me stand as fast as I can," replied Samson; "but de ship rock like de hump-backed donkey dat Massa Salvo ride on."

The hump-backed donkey, by the way, was a mule, but that was near enough for Samson; but the comparison otherwise was not inapt, for the two vessels rose and fell with a movement like that of a steed endeavoring to get rid of its rider.

The position of all parties was now thus:

At the wheel was Tom True, keeping the vessel before the wind.

In front of him were Handsome Harry and Samson, as body-guard.

Next came a deep double line of half-castes, some of whom faced our hero and the others Bill Grunt and the seamen who were struggling to rejoin their leader.

The position was doubly dangerous to Handsome Harry and his two friends, for they had not only the foe to keep at bay, but the very help they wanted from Bill Grunt and the seamen could not reach them without the risk of forcing the main body of the half-castes upon them, and thus, as it were, insure their destruction.

A brave man can fight against odds, but even for the bravest odds too great may be found. With free scope for the play of his weapon, Harry could keep a great number of savages at bay, but if they once pressed upon him that weapon would be useless, and any man might stab him.

He knew this, and shouted to the boatswain not to be too impatient, but to take his time; but the blood of the boatswain was up, and he heard nothing but the clash of weapons and the execrations of his foes.

The half-castes, forced on by pressure from the rear, came nearer. Harry dealt death and deadly wounds to all within his reach. Samson mowed them down like wheat.

Tom True steered as quietly as if he were out for a holiday in a pleasure yacht, but he kept his cutlass between his teeth in case of an emergency.

The trampling of feet intensified, the cries which rang around grew more horrible. The half-castes facing Harry, forced from behind, came nearer.

Suddenly an awful crash was heard, and Harry, who dared not take his eyes from the foe, inquired:

"What is it, Tom?"

"The Belvedere has parted company with us," was the quiet reply.

"What?"

"Quite true. The sea has been too much for us, and the good ship is gone, with a part of this craft's bulwarks sticking to her grappling-irons."

"Farewell, Belvedere," said our hero; "but we will avenge her. Cut down the dogs, Samson! No quarter to any of the Jaguar's crew!"

"Poor Belvedere," sighed Tom; "turned adrift on a cold, hard sea, with only a man with a wooden leg to help you. Hard fate—but I dare say it will prove a little awkward for the man with the wooden leg. Hello! it is getting a little awkward for us, too. At 'em, Samson!"

## CHAPTER IV.

### ADrift.

The position now was to the disadvantage of the boarders. The mere fact of the Belvedere having got adrift had a disheartening effect on its men, while the half-castes, knowing there was nothing left but to conquer or die, were lashed into a frenzy.

"Stand fast, Samson," said Handsome Harry, as a number of yelling fiends rushed upon him.

"Berry good, sar," returned Samson. "Get away, you ugly lubber!"

The ugly lubber "got away" out of the world, falling with a heavy thud upon the deck; but in a moment there was another one in his place. Closer and closer the enemy pressed around.



"I fancy," muttered Tom True, "that I shall have to let the craft drift."

Three half-castes now sprang upon Harry, with their creases uplifted. He parried the first man, cut down the second; but must have fallen by the third, but for an intervention.

This came from Tom True.

Leaving hold of the wheel, he removed his sword from his teeth, chopped down the enemy, and went to work steering again, as cool as a cucumber.

It was all the work of a moment, but the workmanship was perfect.

"Thank you, Tom," said Harry.

"Quite welcome," returned the other.

The light by which they had been fighting—viz., the blue light of the Belvedere—was now waning fast, as that good ship drifted further away. Tom could see her broaching to before the wind, and the waves were dashing over her with the utmost fury.

"She can't stand that long; why doesn't Cutten leave the lights and go to the wheel—if only for a minute?"

But Cutten, for some reason or the other, did not, and the water continued to break over the sides of the gallant vessel.

"We shall soon be in darkness, Harry," said Tom; "if you want to finish these fellows off, you must be sharp. Now, Samson, you are very slow."

"Massa True berry full of fun," returned Samson. "Me go in a lilly quicker."

All this time the half-castes had been diminishing fast; more than half their number were dead, and the deck was strewn with their shrieking wounded. The remnant now made a mighty effort for victory.

Uttering yells which sounded unearthly, they cut about them like madmen; but their yells were answered by British cheers, and their wild swordmanship with British pluck and coolness.

By breaking out they hastened their own end—like ears of corn before the scythes of the mowers they fell, and victory was in the grasp of the Belvederes when the light disappeared.

"The poor Belvedere," groaned Tom, "has gone under."

Then was the struggle in the dark re-

newed, but not with the disadvantage to our hero it had before. The half-castes were few, and betrayed themselves by the wildness with which they darted about. Two or three sailors were wounded by them, but they did more injury to themselves, and in a few minutes only some half dozen were left trembling upon the deck, and pleading for mercy.

The Belvedere men at first cried "No!" but the voice of their leader was heard bidding them spare the few remaining; and, as if to aid him in his clemency, the dark clouds broke, and the moon peeped forth.

By her light they disarmed the half-dozen of the enemy, and, for their further security, bound their hands behind them.

"Well fought, and well won!" said Harry.

"But where is the Belvedere?" uttered Tom.

"I know not, neither do I care," replied Harry, "if he I sought is here among the dead."

"So very bitter, Harry!"

"Oh, Tom, if you knew my wrongs! if you knew what I have suffered, you would not talk thus. I am young in years, but I am old in injury, and why should I tamely sit down beneath a wrong?"

"I never trouble myself about them," said Tom.

"Ah, Tom," said our hero, laying a hand affectionately upon his shoulder, "you and I were molded out of different stuff. You are light, careless, and happy—I am burning with passion within my breast, bubbling over with the memory of great wrongs."

"Axing your pardon, sir," said Bill Grunt, coming up, "but can we look over the ship for a drop of grog? I think we can find a lantern below."

"Yes; and look after the wounded—friend and foe alike."

"There spoke Handsome Harry," said Tom.

"Shall us chuck der dead overboard, sir?" asked the boatswain.

"No; let them lie until the light of the morning comes."

"Massa Grunt," said Samson, who had been wiping his cutlass carefully with a



piece of old rag, "I jes cum and help you to look arter dat grog."

"In course," said Bill, sarcastically, "you can be friends when it soots you!"

"Samson berry fond of Ole Grunt," returned Samson, grinning, and, taking his arm, they went away lovingly together.

When they were gone, the two friends, Harry and Tom, were silent for a moment. Then the latter spoke:

"You take the loss of your ship lightly," he said.

"No," returned Harry, "but I am troubled with weightier thoughts. Her loss would be very serious to me, for I have on board—well, I have on board that which I would not care to lose."

"A lock of Juanita's hair, perhaps?"

"No, Tom," answered Harry, smiling; "the gentle Juanita has never been shorn by me. How these fellows groan!"

"Aye; but it is not the first time we have heard it, mysterious captain of the Belvedere."

"Are you curious to know my history, Tom?"

"No—but if you will tell it, I will listen with interest."

"Believe me, Tom, I cannot tell it to you yet," returned our hero, gloomily. "The time is not yet come to say who or what I am. Some, I know, think me dead; others assert that I am wandering about the wastes of the world, a beggared outcast—but both are wrong. I am neither a beggar nor an outcast; and the time, I trust, is not far distant when I shall right myself, and all I have lost be restored to me."

"So be it, Harry. There is the flash of a lantern—Grunt has got a light."

"And some grog."

"Grunt has a fair idea of the treatment of wounds, but in case of broken limbs——"

"We have none among our own men, Tom, and the rest must fare as best they can."

Bill Grunt and Samson, followed by a few men, were now going round inspecting the wounded. Selecting the most dangerous cases, Grunt sent them below, and on his way came close to his leader.

"Got any grog, Grunt?" said Tom.

"Beg pardon, sir," replied the boatswain, producing a bottle and handing it to his captain.

"None for me," said Harry; "I am not at all fatigued."

"You are an extraordinary fellow," said Tom, taking a long and hearty pull; "will nothing overcome you?"

"I am insensible to fatigue," returned Harry, "and sometimes I think I must be made of iron; at other times I think that I am borne up by my sense of wrong, and when the thirst for vengeance is appeased, I shall break down. Let me take the wheel for a while."

"Thank you, and I will go below, to see if I can find any provender. Can I bring you anything?"

"No, Tom—I am not hungry."

"Wonderful fellow!" muttered Tom, as he crossed the deck and dived below.

Two minutes had barely elapsed, when he appeared again, dragging something after him.

"Come up," he cried, "and let us look at you, my friend."

"What have you there?" asked our hero, eagerly.

"A fellow skulking in the larder."

"Can it be—— And yet, no!" muttered Harry. "Be he what he may, he would not skulk away like a rat in a hole."

"It's a fellow with a tail on the top of his head," cried Tom. "Here, Grunt, show us a light. Why, it's a Chinaman!"

"Ching-Ching—berry quiet man," pleaded the Chinaman, shaking all over like guava jelly. "Me no fighter—berry peaceful man."

"It's my belief," said Tom, gravely, "that you were going to blow up the magazine."

"No; Ching-Ching no blow up," roared the Chinaman; "him berry good."

"Chuck him overboard," said Tom, winking at Bill Grunt.

"No, no! Ching-Ching no swim!" shrieked the unhappy follower of Confucius; "oh, scamery bingo—chi—chi—chic——"

"Will you behave yourself like a gentleman?" demanded Bill Grunt.

"Ching-Ching quite a genlyman," gasped the wretched fellow. "Ching-Ching farder a sworded mandarin."



"Then sit there," said Bill Grunt, pointing to the middle of the deck, "and don't you move until you are told."

## CHAPTER V.

### CHING-CHING THE CHINAMAN.

The morning broke with the promise of a fine day, and by its light all the ghastly work of the night before was revealed.

Strewn about like fallen leaves, and with their forms, so lately full of life, distorted by agony in all sorts of strange positions, lay the dead, and as soon as the light was strong enough, Handsome Harry went round on a tour of inspection.

Brief glances upon those lying dead sufficed to tell him that the man he sought was not there; then he went below, where he experienced another disappointment, and finally he returned upon deck to take the command.

The craft was a beautiful thing, with a low, rakish hull, and tall, finely tapering masts, with canvas enough upon them to carry her through the water at a speed which would defy an ordinary cruiser of the navy. Her character was unmistakable, even if the men on board did not give evidence of it. She was a pirate by trade, with an occasional dash at slave-dealing.

"She will never replace the Belvedere, beautiful as she is," said Harry.

"No," said Tom, "but we can make her better by clearing away these carcasses."

"It can be done now," said our hero.

A party of men were accordingly summoned to dispose of the dead, and while this was going on, Samson, who had been restoring nature with a little nap below, came up, and beheld the unhappy Chinaman, Ching-Ching.

When Bill Grunt gave him orders to sit down he sat, and there he was sitting still when the darky came upon him five hours afterward. Bill Grunt had, in fact, forgotten all about him; and there, if anything had happened to the boatswain, he would probably have remained until somebody kicked him out of the way.

The sight of the Chinaman seemed to take Samson quite aback—the curious loose dress, the sallow face, with its almond-shaped eyes, and the head topped by a pigtail of great length, formed a combination hitherto strange to the follower of Handsome Harry.

It took a great deal to daunt Samson at any time; but there is always something awe-inspiring in anything entirely new and strange, and it was with a little doubt that the negro squatted down in front of the Chinaman, with his hand upon a pistol, in case he showed a tendency to play any tricks.

But there was little fear of Ching-Ching. He was like a humming-bird under the eyes of a basilisk, and sat apparently motionless with terror as the brawny negro took stock of him from head to heel.

"Who you, sar?" asked Samson.

"Ching-Ching berry good man, sar—nebber fighter, sar," replied the Chinaman, pouring out his virtues in breathless haste.

"You berry ugly, sar," said Samson—"cussed ugly, sar."

"Ching-Ching berry ugly," assented the other; "but you, sar, berry handsome."

A broad grin spread over Samson's face, and he looked at Ching-Ching with a very kindly eye. Soft words are melting to the strongest natures.

"So you tink me handsome, sar?" said Samson.

"Bac-bac, big cousin of Ching-Ching, berry handsome. Pan-pang, first three-sworded man in Pekin, more handsome dan Bac-bac; but new genlyman, wif sweet black skin, more handsome dan bof togedder."

This "fetched" Samson completely, and with an approving glance at his black, brawny arms, he said:

"You quite right, Ching-Ching—Samson berry handsome, and berry strong."

"Handsome black genlyman strong enough to kick de world about like a foot-ball," said the very complimentary Chinaman.

"Me not quite sure ob dat," said Samson. "Ching-Ching strong, too?"

"Ching-Ching berry weak," was the modest reply. "Jes lift his own leg—no more."

Samson drew a little nearer, and, like a veterinary surgeon examining a horse, took stock of the muscular development of Ching-



Ching. This appeared to be very small, his arms and legs being like sticks. Our dark friend uttered grunts of disapproval, which Ching-Ching accepted with an unmoved face, just as he accepted the examination.

"Yur berry weak," said Samson. "How come you here?"

Samson had a desire to know a little of his personal history, and Ching-Ching seemed to be willing to gratify him.

"Me born in Pekin," he said, with an amiable smile, which spread right across his face. "Fader and moder berry rich, but soon die; and leave Ching-Ching to bad oncle. Oncle beat Ching-Ching—starve him—make dese legs and arms like bamboo cane. Den one day oncle take Ching-Ching into swamp and leave him to die, but sailor come—good sailor—and take Ching-Ching onto his ship. Good sailor's ship taken by the pirate—all killed but Ching-Ching."

And having concluded this lop-sided story of the babes in the woods, Ching-Ching wiped away a manly tear. Samson did one in sympathy, and murmured, "Poor Ole Ching-Ching."

"Ching-Ching berry poor but berry good," said the Chinaman, looking at Samson out of the corner of his eyes. "Ah! Ching-Ching too good to live. Genlyman with sweet black skin too good to—to die."

The gentleman with the sweet black skin murmured an assent to this rather broad compliment, and finding himself drawn nearer to his new acquaintance proposed a bond of friendship.

"Ching-Ching friends with Samson," he said, extending a huge fist.

The Chinaman held out a long, lean paw, and winced under the grip he received. Then he suddenly stood up, threw himself upon his hands, and presented his feet to the astounded Samson.

"Shake feet," said Ching-Ching.

Samson did not like to be outdone, so he essayed to follow the example of his new friend, and the consequence was that he knocked that friend over and fell upon him with crushing force.

Ching-Ching for a moment presented the appearance of an eel wriggling under a fallen tree, and his face changed from olive

to black, but, fortunately, before complete suffocation cut short his earthly career, Samson rolled off and left him free.

"Sweet black genlyman no shake feet," gasped Ching-Ching, endeavoring to drive back tears of agony, and give forth a smile of pleasure.

"Me not shaken feet lately," said Samson, indifferently; "so out of practice."

Anyhow, this pretty pair had managed to seal their bond of friendship, and in loving amity adjourned below to partake of the contents of a bottle of rum, which Samson had stored away in a locker.

The night of storm had gradually yielded to a calm, and the pirate craft, with its victorious crew, rocked idly upon the bosom of a windless deep.

And all around was one great circle of water, without a speck upon it to show that other life was near.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### THE CRUISER.

Two days passed without any event of interest. The sick and wounded of the Belvedere prospered, but the half-castes, like wounded tigers, refused all consolation and care, and died one by one. When they were all consigned to the deep, or rather to the sharks that hovered near, Handsome Harry remembered the men lent to him by Don Salvo.

Where were they?

They had not been among the dead, they were not among the wounded, and they were not on board.

Inquiries were made of Bill Grunt, but he knew nothing about them. Tom True knew nothing about them, nor any of the men, and the truth became apparent.

They had not left the Belvedere—when the rest of the crew boarded the slaver, they remained behind.

This conclusion seemed to disturb Harry very much, and for the first time he cried out against the delay arising from the calm.

"The Belvedere has not gone down," he



said, "and those fellows will take her back to Don Salvo."

"Well, if they succeed in doing that, there will not be much to complain of," said Tom True.

"Don Salvo must not come on board there, and I away," said our hero; and, as he volunteered no further information, Tom True was left to wonder what the don's presence in what was part of his own property could effect.

One more incident which occurred during the calm we must record. It is not a thing of much importance, but it bears upon something which will follow, and, therefore, we must give it.

Bill Grunt lost his "bacca"-box.

It was only a metal thing, with rather a feeble spring, but Bill prized it, as it belonged to his grandfather, and there was a story connected with it, something to the effect that George the Third had stopped the original owner and taken a pinch of snuff from it, the conveyance of snuff being the original use of the box.

All the seamen knew the box, but, when it was missing, one and all declared that they had not seen it.

"It is werry strange," said Old Bill, "for I remember leaving it here by the cuddy, and putting it down on this 'ere tub; but I don't call to mind taking it up again. I'd give a trifle to get it back."

As the trifle took no definite form of reward, nothing more at the time was heard of the wonderful box, into which a king had dipped his royal fingers, and Bill Grunt went about like a man who had lost a dear child, or something he held near his heart.

On the third day the calm was still upon the sea; but, in the afternoon, a streak of white in the west heralded the coming wind. All sail was set, and the Rattlesnake—the name given to the prize—waited, like a harnessed steed, to start.

All the men, those off duty and those on, were about the deck, for of late they had had an idle time of it, and Ching-Ching sat near the bowsprit, under a huge, flat-topped Chinese umbrella, with which he was now seldom without.

Samson shared this useful article with

him, and sat grinning beneath its shade; not that he had any need of anything to shield his head from the rays of the sun, for it would have stood a very tolerable baking, but because he thought it rather a dignified thing to do.

"Splendifus rumrella, Ching-Ching," he said.

"Mandarin rumbrelly, ki-ki," answered Ching-Ching.

The sailors had their eyes on the sea, on the surface of which the foam was now plainly visible. Not so heavy as that which preceded the late storm, but sufficiently great to promise a stiff breeze.

The first gust came up with a roar, filled the sails, and sent the Rattlesnake through the water at a great pace; but in a little while it settled down to a good healthy bagful of wind.

"We will return to Fortaleza," said Harry, and the head of the craft was put in that direction.

But man proposes, and the Great Invisible disposes. Barely had the Rattlesnake covered a mile of sea when the man on the watch cried:

"A sail ahead!"

"My glass, Grunt!" cried Harry. "Quick!"

The boatswain dived below, and returned with a celerity highly creditable. Our hero swept the horizon rapidly with it.

"Hull down!" he said; "keep on our way for the present, but be ready to tack about."

"A quarter of an hour will decide who and what it is," said Tom True.

Adventurers, either on land or sea, are naturally always on the qui vive—their hand is, in a measure, against every man, and every man's is against theirs.

"Hull up!" said Bill Grunt.

Harry took a second look, and closed his glass hastily.

"A frigate!" he said. "Tack about and bear to the north."

"Is she French or English?" asked Tom True, who had made himself a cigarette and was smoking it with intense relish.

"May be one or the other," replied our hero; "in either case, we are not safe."

"Can we run from him?"

"I hope so, for I have not time to waste in



fighting any man; but, if he runs us too close, I shall not funk him."

Several sailors near exchanged winks of assent. The gallant fellows had a gallant captain, and they knew it.

The Rattlesnake swung about easily, and went well upon the northern tack. The frigate shifted sails, too, and came on in pursuit.

"Sees us, of course?" muttered Tom. "I suppose it will end in a fight; but I hope they will let me have my smoke first."

"Sail ahead!" cried the man on the watch again.

"Another!" cried Handsome Harry, fixing his glass again, and looking through it with a little anxiety.

"Sure enough, there was another sail just peeping above the sea, but to what class of ship it belonged it was impossible for the present to tell.

"Clear the decks!" cried Harry. "How is this fellow's magazine?"

"Well stored with everything," replied Bill Grunt.

"Then load the guns, and tell off the men. If this fellow ahead attempts to stop us, we will blow him out of the water."

"Hurrah for Handsome Harry!" cried the sailors, forgetting for the moment that the adjective was for private use. Harry smiled sadly.

"There was a time," he murmured, "when I might have felt proud of their praise, but my life is embittered, and around my soul are gathered the clouds of darkness and despair. Will the sun of joy ever shine again?"

"You might as well ask if the usual sun will rise to-morrow," said the voice of Tom True at his elbow. "I say, Harry, I cannot make this fellow out a bit."

He referred to the second vessel, which was now faintly visible to the naked eye. Tom had a glass in his hand, through which he had been looking intently.

"He's got storm sails set," he said.

"I see he has," replied Harry, "and I know the craft."

"Do you?"

"Yes—it is the Belvedere."

Tom dropped his cigarette and opened his mouth in astonishment.

"Are you sure, Harry?" he said.

"Yes," replied our hero, "and I have an idea."

"You generally have two or three."

"Thank you. Well, I am going in chase of her; we shall be up to her in a couple of hours if the wind lasts as it bids fair to, and then I mean to give this fellow a lesson."

"Then you are not going to Fortaleza?"

"No; with the Belvedere here, I have no need to. Now listen, Tom."

"I'm all attention."

"I can keep ahead of this fellow if I like, but I do not mean to. When we have overhauled the Belvedere, I will shift you, half the men, and a share of ammunition, and we will fight him."

Tom True slapped his thigh, and, raising his cigarette, sucked at it vigorously. As soon as it smoked freely again, he said:

"I'll back Handsome Harry against all the world!"

"Have you taken to compliment me—after the men?"

"Handsome is as handsome does," sang Tom. "Shall I take Samson?"

"He won't go with you," said Harry; "take the Chinaman."

"Will he be of any use?"

"Try him. There's a good deal of the cat about his limbs, and I think he will fight."

"He did not fight when we boarded the Rattlesnake."

"No, for he was a prisoner on board; you could not expect it."

"Right, I could not; anyhow, I will try him, although I don't think that he will risk his precious carcass for us any more than he did for our foes."

Still, it was worth a trial, and Tom walked over to the forecastle to see what he could do with the Chinaman.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE FRENCHMAN MATCHED.

Ching-Ching was entertaining Samson with an account of the luxuries of his happy



home in Pekin when the young mate came up. He recognized the officer with a low salaam, and, producing a fan from his vest, rattled it lightly.

"We want you to make yourself useful, Ching-Ching," he said.

"Ching-Ching glad to be ob sarvice, sar," said the Chinaman.

"That ship ahead belongs to us," continued Tom, "and I am going on board. I want you to come with me."

"Very happy, sar; but not for slave, sar."

"Oh, no; we are going to fight that frigate behind, and I want you to help me."

Before making any reply to this, Ching-Ching closed his fan, put it away, and shut up his umbrella; and then he rose to his feet and crossed his hands meekly upon his breast.

"Ching-Ching, sar," he said, "not nebber fight—he man ob peace."

"Are you afraid to fight?" demanded Tom, angrily.

"No, sar," returned the Chinaman, unruffled; "but when I quite a boy I take a big solemn oath nebber to do anything wrong. Fighting berry wrong, sir."

"Well, I am not going to argue with you," said Tom. "Whether you fight or not, I shall take you on board."

"Berry good, sar."

"And you will please to arm yourself with cutlass and pistols."

"Me not know how to shoot," said Ching-Ching. "P'r'aps I cock de pistol wrong way and shoot you, sar. P'r'aps I cut myself with the cutlass."

"You may cut yourself if you like," said Tom; "but if I find the muzzle of your pistol anywhere near me, I'll knock your head off."

"Berry good, sar," said Ching-Ching, calmly; "me keep dat weppin todder way."

Tom walked away, and the Chinaman, turning to Samson, asked if he must fight.

"Yes," said Samson, decidedly.

"S'pose I hide away below," suggested Ching-Ching.

"Massa Harry run you up de yard-arm."

"Chick!" said Ching-Ching, imitating the action of hanging.

Small arms were now being passed out of

the stores of the Rattlesnake, and Ching-Ching went below to the cuddy, where he stowed away his precious gingham. Then he went to Bill Grunt and asked for arms.

"Help yourself," said the boatswain, pointing to a pile of cutlasses and pistols.

Ching-Ching thereupon, after the manner of his countrymen, made a most tremendous spectacle of himself, sticking pistols and cutlasses about him until they resembled the quills of the porcupine.

"Hallo, Ching-Ching!" cried Old Grunt, "what are you going to do with that lot?"

"Me going to fight," replied the Chinaman. "Me fight with a ki-ki; ki—me kill with a ko—ko—ko."

"Whatsoever a 'ki—ki; ko—ko' may be," muttered the boatswain, "you will get along better with it than a cutlass. Davy Jones! if he falls down he'll cut hisself to pieces!"

The Belvedere, laboring under too small allowance of canvas, was soon overhauled, and there Cutten—the sailor who had been left in charge of the blue fire—was discovered at the wheel, but the half-castes were nowhere to be seen.

The Rattlesnake was run up alongside, and the two vessels were lashed together. Harry and Tom leaped on board.

"Well done, Cutten!" cried Harry; "you have done well."

"Yes, sir," replied the sailor, touching his forelock; "but I've had tough work with them three beasts on board."

"Who are they?"

"The half-castes, sir. They've been running about like a lot of raging devils, mad with drink; but they have gone to sleep at last."

The men were discovered in the captain's cabin sodden with some of the rum our hero kept in store. He stood over them with an angry face.

"Pitch these dogs into the sea," he said.

"Give 'em a thrashing," suggested Tom, "and sober them with a week in irons."

"Do what you will, Tom," said Harry.

Tom brought down four men, and with their aid the three swarthy villains were triced up and brought back to their senses by a liberal application of a rope's-end. It



was not so bad as the cat-o'-nine tails, but it, as Bill Grunt said, "tickled 'em a bit."

"You will understand what this is for," said Harry, sternly; "insubordination and drunkenness I will never permit. Tom, put them in irons."

This was done, and they were laid away with the rage of demons surging in their hearts. Harry went on deck to superintend the transfer of ammunition.

When laborers are willing, work is quickly done, and already a considerable quantity of powder and shot had been passed to the Belvedere. The two vessels labored on together, while the frigate was, of course, coming up hand over hand.

French she undoubtedly was, and the men with great glee prepared to give her a warm reception.

The enemy evidently expected an easy prize, for there was little or no preparation going on aboard. The officers were peering through their glasses and the men were lounging over the sides.

"He can't make us out," said Tom, "or he would not remain asleep."

"I will wake him up soon," returned Harry.

"Is all ready, Grunt?"

"All, sir."

"Then pick your men, Tom, and we will part company."

But this Tom would not do.

"Let them volunteer," he said. And, on hearing what was required of them, the men divided themselves into two portions, and one went on board the Belvedere—Ching-Ching, "armed all over," coolly walking at the head of them.

"Never mind," said one of the tars, when a few of his comrades expressed a desire to "walk into him for his darned impudence"—"never mind, he will soon be at the tail."

As soon as the Belvedere and Rattlesnake parted company, Tom True out with his canvas and put half a mile between them. Then both crafts, according to agreement, shortened sail, and the Frenchman, in a wondering kind of way, came up between and fired a blank shot at each as a signal to capitulate.

The answer was a round shot from the

Rattlesnake, which knocked a hole in his side, and caused no little confusion in the mess-room of the officers, in which dinner was laid.

The audacity of this little craft was something so astounding that the Frenchman was for the moment nonplussed; but a second shot from the Belvedere, which cut away his fore-sail, raised his ire, and a mighty squealing arose from both officers and men.

The guns were run out rapidly, but ere they could be loaded, both of the little daring vessels poured in a broadside of shot, with immense execution.

Great masses of rigging, tangled bundles of rope, fell thundering upon the deck, and the foremast, being struck midway, broke in two and came toppling down.

"Hurrah for Handsome Harry!" cried the Rattlesnake.

"Three cheers for Jolly Tom!" cried the Belvedere, and forth belched two more broadsides.

The Frenchman now began to fire, but so wildly that he did little or no execution. The Rattlesnake tacked and got across his bows, sweeping the deck with a terrible raking fire.

Tom True, taking the hint, worked his way to the stern, and there gave the bewildered foreigners a second dose, two shots entering below the water-line.

All the French execrations then popular, and their name was legion, were poured out upon the two tormentors. The frigate was crippled, and all attempts to restore the rigging were promptly stopped by a few well-directed shots. This done, the Belvedere and the Rattlesnake turned their attention again to the deck of the enemy.

The frigate, in proper hands, was big and powerful enough to have sunk half a dozen such craft as were now harassing it with their powder and shot; but the discipline had been upset and put to confusion by the wonderful success of the prompt and daring attack arranged by our hero.

A helpless log, she lay at the mercy of her foes, and soon the effect of the fire became apparent—she was settling by her stern.

Then the men deserted their guns and rushed upon the deck. Harry, not desiring



to slay helpless foes, gave the signal to cease firing, and hoisted a white flag in token of amity. The Frenchman answered with a yell of defiance, and lowered his boats.

"Will they attempt to board us, sir?" said Bill Grunt.

"I think not," answered Harry; "but they can if they like—I shall not run."

True now asked by signal what he should do, and Harry answered "Fight."

The men cheered, and the Frenchmen in eight boats pulled a little away to watch their frigate, which was now fast sinking.

The watching was not long, for soon her stern dipped under, her bows uprose, she quivered for a moment, and then, with a plunge, went down. The English were silent, being too magnanimous to cheer over a fallen foe. The Frenchmen uttered yells of vengeance, and came on—four boats toward the Rattlesnake and four toward the Belvedere.

"Keep the signal of amity up until they are within three hundred yards," said Harry, "then fire into them."

This was signaled to the Belvedere, and accordingly the flags were kept afloat. The Frenchman looked upon it as a sign of cowardice and cheered scoffingly.

When within about two hundred yards, the white flag was lowered. A moment's pause followed, but the Frenchmen came on, and then—

A thundering roar, and a chorus of wild shrieks; then another roar from the Belvedere, and another chorus of shrieks, and the air was full of smoke.

When the wind cleared it away, the boats were gone, and some fifty men were struggling in the water.

"Out with the boats and save what you can," said Harry; and the boats were lowered.

But the enemy were bad swimmers, and sank rapidly. Man after man went down, until only one was left, and he, as the boats drew near, uttered a shriek of defiance, and sank.

"A gallant enemy," said Handsome Harry. "I am sorry none are saved."

"Men will be wondering at home about that good ship," said Tom, on board the Bel-

vedere. "Your cutlasses are not wanted, Ching-Ching."

"Berry glad," said the Chinaman. "Ching-Ching a man ob peace."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### MISSING GOODS.

A burning midday sun shone down upon a fair island where Nature had been bountiful in her gifts. There were hills and valleys, with rich foliage up to the very summit of the former, and ran down into the very depths of the latter. Water-falls ran down from the high lands at a furious pace, and over the smooth land subsided into peaceful streams. Tall trees, laden with fruit, bushes burdened with flowers, were everywhere, and on every side birds with gaudy plumage flew about in countless numbers.

The sand upon the coast was like silver, and gleamed in the sunlight, but there was a very narrow belt of it, for the rich grass and bushes grew almost down to the sea. This was on the eastern side of the island; but on the western, the waters beat against tall cliffs, which rose a thousand feet above the level of the sea.

There was one peculiarity about these cliffs, which is worth noting. They were composed of two classes of material—limestone and a softish clay, which seemed to have been tumbled together by some violent contention of Nature.

The result of this mixture was that the cliffs became honey-combed by the waves, and a series of caves presented their yawning mouths to the ocean. On this side there was nothing approaching human life, but on the other two ships rocked idly at anchor.

There the Rattlesnake and the Belvedere put in for a rest. Harry knew the value of relaxation; and, although it little accorded with his restless spirit, he had too much regard for those around him not to make some sacrifice on their account.

And thus it was that we find the two crafts lying idle by the lone island where, as far as



one could see, the foot of man had never trod before.

On board the Rattlesnake nobody could be seen, and on the Belvedere only three persons—Ching-Ching, Samson, and Bill Grunt.

Tom True was ashore with an exploring party. Handsome Harry was in his cabin, writing. A number of the crew were lying idly upon the beach, and the rest were below, preferring the shade to the hot deck.

Ching-Ching was sharing what was now known as his "everlasting umbrella" with Samson, and, as usual, employing an immense amount of soft soap.

"Massa Samson berry good to poor old Ching-Ching," he said. "He tank him berry much for de sash, but me not want it."

"You much better hab it," urged Samson, holding up a gaudy handkerchief, such as negroes fondly love.

"No, tank you," replied Ching-Ching; "me want nothing but lilly bisket and water."

"You no like rum?" said Samson, slyly.

"Me take 'a drop sometimes," said Ching-Ching, with an air of great simplicity; "but me no care about it."

Old Grunt now came hovering near, looking behind tubs and piles of rope like a man who has lost something.

"What the matter, Ole Bill?" asked Samson.

"What's the matter?" repeated the boatswain, with a grunt; "you may well ax that. I've lost my Sunday-going breeches."

"You lost what?"

"My Sunday-going breeches," replied Bill Grunt. "I got 'em wet t'other day, and hung 'em out on the bowsprit to dry; I forgot all about 'em, and now they are gone."

"Drop overboard p'r'aps," suggested Ching-Ching.

"Or gone to look for de 'bacca-box," said Samson, grinning.

"There's some thievish lubber on board," growled the boatswain, "for Old Cutten lost all his 'bacca t'other day."

"Tieving berry bad," said Ching-Ching, with a dolorous shake of his head. "When I libe with my farder in Pekin, bad tief come in de night and cut off my farder's pigtail and steal him shoes. My farder died of grief through dat."

"You told me dat your fader die of de measles," said Samson.

"My farder taken berry bad wif de measles," replied Ching-Ching, "when de tief come and finish him off."

"Oh! dat so," said Samson, satisfied.

"All I've got to say is this," said Bill Grunt, "that if I find out who's got my breeches there'll be a little turn up atween us."

"What de breeches like?" asked Ching-Ching.

"White duck," replied the boatswain, "and there's a reef behind I let in about two years ago."

He went away grumbling, and Ching-Ching favored Samson with a long account of a public marauder in Pekin, who stole a manadarin's umbrella, and was compelled to swallow it by order of the authorities.

"Tieving berry bad—berry bad," he said. "Oh, so berry bad."

Handsome Harry now appeared upon deck, calling for Samson.

"Have you been in my cabin lately?" he asked.

"No, sar," Samson replied, hurrying up.

"I left a bottle of rum upon my table an hour ago, and it is gone."

"Me not touch it, sar."

"It is very strange. Come here, Grunt."

The boatswain came up, and, on being interrogated, declared that he knew nothing about it. Ching-Ching simply said that he did not like rum.

"It is very strange," said Harry. "I do not care so much about it, and I do not want to stint the men; but if I find any peculation going on, I shall deal very severely with the culprit."

A boat now pulled up alongside, and Tom True stepped on deck. He brought a report of the country.

"A paradise," he said, "with provisions for a nation. The plants and flowers were beautiful, and I cut a few to make our cabins look lighter. By the way, did I leave my knife on board? I have lost it."

Nobody had heard anything about it.

"I had it last night," said Tom, "in my jacket pocket, and now it is gone."

"Did you leave your jacket anywhere?"



"Yes—on deck. I took it off while I was resting, and went to hammock without it."

"There's a thief on board somewhere," said Bill Grunt.

"A berry bad tief," added Ching-Ching. "If Massa Capen git him, tie him up and whip away."

"You may be certain I shall do that," said our hero.

An uproar below now turned the attention of all in that direction, and the voice of Old Cutten, who was a very irate old man, was heard to declare that he would make an anatomical research into somebody if he got at them.

"Stop that howling," said Harry, and returned to his cabin.

Bill Grunt darted down the fore hatchway to stem the torrent of invectives pouring from Old Cutten, but in this he signally failed; indeed, he joined in it, and Tom True bawled out:

"What is the matter there?"

"Here's a go, sir," said Bill Grunt, popping his head up. "Somebody's stolen Old Cutten's wooden leg."

"Yes, and I'll have his ——" cried Old Cutten, going in for a fresh list of threats bearing upon the internal organization of the culprit; "yes, I will!"

"Oh, this is some absurd joke," said Tom. "Ask the men to give it up."

"They say they ain't touched it."

"Send them here."

The men came tumbling up, and fell into a line. Tom urged them to confess if they had any share in the joke, but they one and all denied it.

"No," was the answer of all, "they had not touched it."

"Is Cutten popular?" asked Tom.

"Werry, sir, since he saved the Belvedere," replied Bill Grunt.

"Let me hear what Cutten has to say."

The boatswin dispatched one of the strongest men to bring him up, and presently he appeared with the old man on his back. Cutten's face was hot and fiery, and his eyes gleamed.

He poured out his story in haste. He had only turned into his hammock to rest for an hour, and took off his leg, because it had a

tendency to dig holes in his resting-place, and when he awoke it was gone.

"And about I can't get without it," said the old man; "for a crutch I've not got, and a walking-stick is wus than useless. Practical jokes ain't practical jokes when they are played upon a man with one leg."

Murmurs of sympathy arose from the listeners, especially from Samson and Ching-Ching, who had drawn near. Ching-Ching was seen to wipe his eyes with the fringe of his sunshade.

"I shall give the crew two hours," said Tom, "and then, if the missing things are not forthcoming, I'll have the ship searched. Pipe all hands from the shore!"

They were sufficiently near for the pipe to be heard, and the men lying about the beach, wondering what was the cause of this sudden call, tumbled into the boats and came aboard. One and all volunteered to bring up their hammocks at once, but this Tom declined.

"I give you two hours," he said, "and then I will look closer into it."

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE ARTICLES FOUND.

The two hours soon sped away, every man remaining on deck with the exception of Ching-Ching, who went into the steward's room to wash up the dinner-service of the captain.

The room was too small to hide anything, and being, moreover, flush with the deck—under the poop, in fact—there was nothing in this to give rise to suspicion.

Ching-Ching, on his part, showed his trust in the crew by leaving his umbrella outside, and after he had been at his work a little while he began to sing, in a voice of peculiar squeakiness and power:

"Down in Pekin

My farder hab some tin,

And his houses was big and wide,

And he kep dis chile like a mandarin,

Until he hab de measles and den he slowly died."



This touching verse was followed with a chorus of "Ki—ki—ki," and a "Ko—kō—ko," almost interminable. The rest of the song we refrain from giving, for there was a deal too much of it to print. When the two hours were up it was not finished. Tom then came on deck.

"Any news, Grunt?" he said.

"No, sir."

"Up with hammocks and chests."

The inspection went forward briskly, the men readily assisting, but nothing whatever came to light. Samson brought up a box, and disclosed such a treasure of odds and ends of canvas and silk, bits of candlesticks, bits of bone, and so on, that Tom was staggered and the sailors convulsed with laughter.

"Where on earth did you get all these from?" asked True.

"Hairy looms in de fam'ly," replied Samson; "handed down from generalation to generalation."

"Then, if I were you, I would be merciful to the next branch of your family, and burn the lot," said Tom.

Samson looked surprised, and having repacked his box with much care and precision, carried it below tenderly.

"Now, I must tell you, men, that I never suspected any of you," said Tom, "and that this inspection is not intended to imply any doubt of your honesty."

"Thanky, sir," replied the men.

"There is one more man I want to see," said Tom. "Ching-Ching."

"He's washing up, sir."

"Call him here."

Ching-Ching was now singing his loudest, and the row he made was fearful. Probably wishing to be undisturbed during his harmonic breathings, he had locked the door.

The sailor knocked loudly, and called out: "Ching-Ching!"

"With a ki—ki—ki and a ko—ko—ko," chorused the Chinaman.

"Kick open that door," said Tom.

In a moment it was down. A strong foot, well applied, sent the door flying open, discovering Ching-Ching in an attitude of amazement.

"Who dat?" he demanded.

"The mate wants to see you," growled the sailor.

Ching-Ching dropped the plate he was washing and came outside the door. Then he stood blinking and rocking to and fro.

His appearance was unmistakable. Somehow Ching-Ching had got over his dislike to strong drink, and was very drunk indeed.

"You have been drinking," said Tom, sternly.

"Him berry drunk," murmured Samson.

"Me drung!" said Ching-Ching, forcing upon his face an indignant look—"me, Massa True?"

"Yes, you. Stand still."

"My farder in Pek—Pekin had same ting in feet," said Ching-Ching; "use roll about."

"Bring out your traps," said Tom.

The Chinaman having turned round and nearly turned over, staggered into the little room and brought out a small parcel about the size of a cricket ball. This was supposed to contain all his linen and wardrobe, and he was about displaying it for the edification of all beholders, when Tom interrupted him.

"Take it away," he said. "Have you nothing more?"

"Nushing," replied Ching-Ching, and once more he turned like a teetotum making its expiring efforts to stand.

As he did so, something slipped down the left leg of his capacious trousers and fell upon the deck.

"Darned if that ain't my 'bacca box!" cried Bill Grunt.

He ran forward and picked it up, and at that moment something came down the right leg of Ching-Ching's trousers—it was an empty rum bottle. The truth flashed upon all.

"Hold hard!" cried Bill Grunt, seizing the Chinaman, who was very drunk and very limp, by the waist, and turning him upside down—"let's see what else you've got."

One glance down the capacious nether garments of the arch villain sufficed, and Bill uttered a loud cry.

"Darned if he ain't got my breeches on!" he cried.

Then ensued a scene of the most ludicrous



description. Ching-Ching was turned almost inside out, and a vast number of articles revealed. Cutten's wooden leg was discovered down his back, in company with two volumes of Cook's Voyages, belonging to Tom True. There were also an old gridiron, a wooden spoon, and a shoe which had seen better days.

As these and other treasures were revealed, the spectators looked on with varied feelings. Samson seemed to be overcome with astonishment, and rubbed his woolly head like one who doubted the evidence of his senses. Tom True was quiet, but his eyes twinkled, and half the sailors wore a broad grin upon their faces.

As for Ching-Ching, he submitted quietly, with closed eyes, to the humiliation offered him. When it was over, Tom True addressed him:

"Now, you Ching-Ching," he said, "what have you to say for yourself?"

The culprit opened his eyes and his mouth at the same time. He wagged his head, but said nothing.

"Speak up, will you?"

Ching-Ching was either too much overcome with emotion or too drunk to speak, for he remained as speechless as before.

"Stow him away somewhere until he is sober," said Tom True; "then bring him to me."

"I'll take care ob him," said Samson, whose sterling nature would not permit him to desert a friend in distress.

"Then, Samson, I hold you accountable for the prisoner," said Tom True; "and I shall expect you to produce him when called upon."

"All right, Massa Tom," said Samson. "Come along, Ching-Ching."

Ching-Ching was too far gone, so Samson carried him below, there to sleep off the effects of his potations.

Chinaman, whose speculations had been brought to light in such an untimely manner—Old Cutten and Bill Grunt, the boatswain.

Both had been touched in a tender part. Old Cutten loved his wooden leg, and prided himself upon the possession of one of the finest pieces of mechanical ingenuity under the sun. "That wood leg," he was wont to say, "was manufactured by the best man as ever handled a tool, and it was cut out of the mainmast of the Royal George, as went to the bottom of the sea off Spithead." This was his story—the real facts of the case being that he had picked it up cheap at an auction, and had no idea of its maker or former possessor whatever. He had, however, talked so much about the treasure that it was looked upon as part and parcel of himself, and the removal of a real limb could scarcely have been a greater offense than that perpetrated by Ching-Ching.

Bill Grunt was touched in his pride; he was an officer, and liberties had been "took" with his 'bacca box, and, therefore, with him, by a rascally "Chinee." Mr. Grunt waxed very wroth as he thought of it and thirsted for vengeance.

The perpetrator of the infamies we have recorded slept on till nearly sundown, and then awoke and found Samson beside him.

"Hallo!" he cried; "you here, Samson?"

"Oh! Ching-Ching!" returned Samson; "what hab you been doing?"

"What dat you say?"

"What for you steal?" said Samson, solemnly.

Ching-Ching's face changed as he dimly remembered the past, and rapidly running his hands over his body, he found that he had been despoiled of his treasure. Then he groaned an awful groan.

"Are you ill?" asked Samson, with a look of anxiety.

"Berry ill," groaned Ching-Ching. "Dying ill."

Samson sprang up with a look of pain, and asked if he could get the sick man anything.

"No, no! too late," groaned the Chinaman. "I sink fast!"

"Oh, Chingery! don't leave Ole Samson."

## CHAPTER X.

### REPENTANCE OF CHING-CHING.

There were two men on board the Belvedere who thirsted for the punishment of the



"I must, I mus'!" said Ching-Ching. "Go for Massa Tom and de good Ole Massa Grunt. I want dem to forgif dis chile afore I die. Be quick, for all de life am running out ob de soles ob my feet."

Samson tore up-stairs full of grief, and plunged head first at Tom, who was walking about the deck.

"Oh, come, Massa Tom," he cried—"Ching-Ching dying fast!"

"Ching-Ching dying?"

"Him almost dead, and he want eberybody to forgif him."

The news spread fast, and almost as soon as Tom got below, Cutten, Bill Grunt and a number of the crew had gathered round the hammock wherein Ching-Ching lay.

He looked pale, and there was a look of quiet resignation in his face as he opened his eyes and surveyed those about him with a smile.

"A lilly drop of water," he said.

Bill Grunt, who felt sorry for the invectives he had been pouring upon the Chinaman for some time past, hastened to get some.

Ching-Ching took a little, and for a moment was a trifle better, but he soon subsided again.

"Berry bad," he said, softly—"berry bad."

"What is the matter with you?" asked Tom. "Have you any pain?"

"Pain all ober," answered Ching-Ching—"daggery sort ob pain. Oh, oh! ki—ki—ki. Oh!"

The final groan was very deep, and Old Cutten and Bill Grunt exchanged glances of sympathy. They felt they had gone too far in condemning the unfortunate man now in the throes of death.

"I hab one—two ting to say afore I die," said Ching-Ching. "Massa Grunt?"

"Here," said the old boatswain, in a deep bass voice.

"I steal your 'bacca box," murmured Ching-Ching.

"Blow the 'bacca box!" returned Grunt; "we settle all sech things on the lid of Davy Jones' locker. But are you dying, mate?"

Ching-Ching underwent a strong convulsion before replying. His groans were ter-

rific, and his eyes were filled with tears—evidently the tears of pain.

"How can Ching-Ching live," he asked, "when him all ober bad?"

This was sound reasoning, and the seamen murmured, "Aye, aye."

"I want you to forgif me," said Ching-Ching, "for taking dat box."

"Why, my lad, it ud go agin my grain to mention it jist as you are goin' to slip your cable. Here's my fist on it."

"Oh! tank you—tank you," murmured Ching-Ching, his voice growing weaker and weaker every moment. "Oh! tank you so much. Now, if Massa Cutten forgif me, I die in peace."

"Come forrard like a man," growled Bill Grunt, addressing Cutten, who hung fire a bit. "That's it—touch his fist. He is too weak to shake yourn. Done like a man!"

"I took also a lilly drop of rum in a bottle belonging to capen," said Ching-Ching, rolling his eyes about. "Will he forgif poor dying man?"

"I don't suppose that he will think any more about it," said Tom.

"You tink so?"

"I am sure so."

"Oh! now Ching-Ching indeed happy," said the Chinaman, and then he closed his eyes as if he had quite done with the things of this world.

"Before you leave us," said Tom True, quietly taking up a position near the hammock, "I want you, Ching-Ching, to answer a question or two."

"Tank you, Massa True; but be quick, please—I going."

"I'll be quick enough. Now, then, have you ever committed a theft before?"

Tom expected a lying answer in the negative, but his calculation was quite upset by Ching-Ching replying:

"Orfen."

"Why, then, you are an old thief."

"No, Massa True; me take things acause me can't help it."

"Kleptomania, eh?" said Tom—"you steal against your will?"

"Yes, Massa Tom," replied Ching-Ching; "my farder in Pekin do same. He berry rich



—he want for noting; plenty ob rice, and servants to fix up his pigtail; but he steal ole umbrella belonging to mandarin, and dey hang him for it."

"Your father was hanged for stealing?"

"Yes, Massa Tom, but he no want to steal. I steal, but I no want to steal—eberybody kind to Ching-Ching; but I take de tings, and die of shame and a broken heart. Oh! ki—ki—ki; de pain again."

"But didn't your farder die of de mea—" began Samson, when Ching interrupted him with a groan.

"Oh—oh! Ki—ki—ki! De pain too great for dis poor chile!"

"So berry bad?" said Samson, sympathizingly.

Ching-Ching rolled his almond eyes, and looked unutterable things.

"Die right off now," he murmured. "Berrer leave me—all but lubly Samson."

The sailors went out on tiptoe, suffering from varied feelings, Old Cutten and Bill Grunt bringing up the rear.

"He's mortal bad," said the old boatswain.

"It's the drink," returned Old Cutten.

"He warn't used to it."

"And it rushed to a wital part—a principal horgan," added Bill Grunt. "What do you think on him, sir?" he added, addressing Tom True, who had followed them out of the cabin.

"He must suffer immensely," returned Tom, dryly. "Poor Ching-Ching!"

As soon as the dying man was left with Samson he ceased to utter cries of anguish, and kicked up one leg in a sort of ecstasy.

"What de matter now, ole chap?" asked Samson, with much anxiety.

"De matter is dat I'm berry well, tank you," replied Ching-Ching, sitting up.

"What, you not ill?" demanded Samson.

"Not a bit. Was berry bad jes now, but come round like smoke."

"Dis sumfin like imperostion, Ching," said Samson, seriously.

"Oh, no. It quite a family complain'," replied Ching-Ching. "My farder at Pekin always so. Soon ill—soon well—up and down—chic."

"Dat a rum farder ob yours," said Samson.

"Berry," returned Ching-Ching, dropping out of his hammock like a cat. And then he performed a dance illustrative of his triumph over the enemy, which carried Samson far away into the realms of unbounded admiration.

The next morning Bill Grunt was on the forecastle when the vision of an umbrella coming up the hatchway saluted his eyes. The umbrella was followed by the form of Ching-Ching, who appeared to be perfectly cool and comfortable. Taking no notice whatever of the boatswain, he proceeded to parade the deck with the air of a gentleman at ease.

"Well, I'm darned!" muttered Bill. "I say, Mister Ching-Ching!"

"What you say, sir?" asked Ching-Ching.

"I thought you were dying. Have you been gammoning us?"

Ching-Ching turned upon him a look of lofty indignation.

"You ought to blush, Massa Grunt," he said. "You call yourself a Christian, and yet you berry sorry to see me berrer after my scrutinating illness. Yah—I feel 'shamed of you!"

"Blow your illness!" returned Bill; "and mind you—jist you take a hint—if I ketches you inside my breeches again, I'll kick the bottom out."

Ching-Ching bowed politely, lifting his left leg up and curling the toes under the ball of the foot in a most wonderful way. There was a volume of derision in the act, and it made the old boatswain purple with rage. But what could he do? He had forgiven Ching-Ching for his first offense, and there was an end of it.

The next day the Rattlesnake was, by the command of our hero, dismasted and stowed away in one of the caverns on the other side of the island. Most of the stores were transferred to the Belvedere, and that gallant ship, with its flag floating proudly before the breeze, started upon a fresh cruise.

The flag of the Belvedere was a red heart upon a plain white ground; underneath were the words "I come."



CHAPTER XI.

THE BLACK JAGUAR.

A lazy breeze was rolling over the ocean, and imperfectly filling the sails of a large brig making for a headland just visible like a cloud before it. On the deck three or four Lascars lounged about, another was at the wheel, and aloft one was on the lookout. Besides these, there were two men pacing the deck—men of different type, who, in consideration of the important part they will play in our history, demand a little description.

One was tall and dark, with the frame of a giant. As he trod to and fro, the planks quivered beneath the tread of his muscular limbs. He was clad in a Spanish costume, short jacket, gaudy sash, and velvet cap, made of the richest materials and plentifully garnished with gold lace. His weapons were a sword and a brace of pistols.

The other was a man of different mold, being not more than five feet seven, and almost effeminate in figure. He had a fair young face, with a little white mustache upon his upper lip, and when he looked at one his large blue eyes seemed to be full of tenderness. Nobody would have dreamt of his being cruel and remorseless.

And yet he was declared to be so, for he was Ira Staines, first officer of the Black Jaguar—the most dreaded of all pirate craft; and the man who walked moodily beside him was its captain.

"Will these sails never fill?" muttered the captain, looking aloft, impatiently. "We are only crawling, when I long to fly."

"Fly from what?" demanded the other. "A phantom—a dream?"

"My dreams are no phantoms, Ira; they are stern prophecies of what is coming. I saw him last night; he stood by my side, and he said, 'I come.'"

"That foolish motto he bears upon his flag troubles you more than it does me," said Ira Staines, laughing. "What is there in a man saying, 'I come?' Well, let him come, and we will give him a warm reception."

"You know not what you say, Ira," returned the captain of the Black Jaguar.

"Have I not told you that the hour we meet will see me die?"

"You have told me so, but I do not believe it."

"What are you made of, Ira? Are you wood or stone?"

"No, my worthy captain," replied the other. "I am flesh and blood, as you are; yet I am not foolish and weak, as you are."

"There is no other man on board who dare call me so."

"I know it," said Ira, quietly; "but, knowing I may say it, I out with it. Now listen. A man can die but once."

"Aye, and then——?"

"Why, there's an end of him."

"No, Ira—there you are wrong. But enough; it is not death I fear—it is death by his hand I shun. Oh! if you but knew the reason of all this, you would pity me."

"No, I should not," replied Ira Staines, "for I pity nothing."

"The men may well call you the white demon," said the captain, "for surely you are a devil in angel's form. Why, man, you are made for another life—to woo and win—to talk of tender things."

"Perhaps I am," replied Ira Staines; "but I am different; and yet I think I was gentle once."

"What changed you?"

"A false friend, and falser woman. But they paid the penalty! Both are dead, and I am an outcast."

"So that is your story, Ira. Well, man, there is nothing new in it, except that you have not found another love."

"Sail astern, sir," cried the man aloft.

"Said I not so, Ira?" said the captain. "You may spare your glass, for it is he."

"I am not so sure of that," returned Ira, fixing his telescope; "it may be a treasure in the way of a good fat merchantman."

"No, no, it is he!"

"Whoever it is," replied Ira Staines, "he has got the breeze with him. Coming up, hand over hand."

"Of course—of course; Ira, said I not so?"

"Stay until we make sure. A flag flying. Hum—white ground, with a spot."

"A red spot, Ira?"

"I cannot say which it is. I cannot make



out the form and color. Yes, I have it—yes, a red heart!”

“A breeze, shrieking vengeance, comes with him,” said the captain of the *Jaguar*, turning ghastly pale.

“We must fight him, captain.”

“No, no! not a shot against the *Belvedere*.”

“Why, this is womanish, childish, pitiful,” exclaimed Ira, wrathfully. “If you show the white feather like this you will lose your command over the men.”

“It is not cowardice, Ira, but I must fly. Crowd on all sail. Let us escape from him, and then you may lead me where you will—to fight, to murder, to commit aught to risk my life—only let us never meet. You know that I fled, and left my consort ship within his power, in the storm.”

“Yes, I know,” muttered Ira Staines, bitterly, “and it was lost.”

“As we shall be, if ever we meet with him,” returned the captain. “With a chance of life I will fight anything, but the odds on his side are too great.”

“He has but ten guns, and we have fourteen.”

“He has more than guns, Ira—he has Providence on his side, he must have. We must fly!”

“If we can, good captain. He is coming up fast.”

“Yes, I see him,” muttered the captain, gloomily; “he is coming very fast.”

“He is but a boy, and you are a man in the prime of life; why should you fear him so?”

“I cannot tell you.”

“At least let us fight for ourselves, if he comes up.”

“Well, be it so; but if we can get the breeze we must fly before him.”

“I can’t understand him,” muttered Ira Staines; “the boldest and most reckless man I know, afraid of this youngster, Handsome Harry. Flying before him now for nearly two years—dreaming of and dreading him with a horror that never leaves his side. Strange—very strange. Up, there! all hands on deck.”

The crew came up to the number of about two hundred—dark, reckless-looking vil-

lains of all nations. To them Ira Staines addressed a few words.

“We are pursued,” he said; “but as fighting with a cruiser brings no profit, I propose we show him a clean pair of heels. He has got the breeze at present, but it will be sure to come up with us before he does, and I think we can get away. However, if you wish to fight, we will.”

The men murmured, and it was plain that fighting without profit was not in their line. Like tigers, they found no pleasure in the chase unless blood came out of it.

“Thank you, Ira,” said the captain, as his friend rejoined him; “you have saved me from a probable charge of cowardice.”

“Knowing it is not your weakness,” returned Ira. “If you were really a cur, I should leave you to your fate. We will clear decks in case it should be wanted; although I think we shall get the breeze in time.”

This was done, and by the aid of his glass Ira could see that the same thing was being done on board the *Belvedere*. She was now about two miles away on the *Black Jaguar*’s stern, with all her sails distended.

“She’s a beauty, and handled to perfection,” muttered the *Jaguar*’s mate. “This Handsome Harry is no fool. I wonder what he is like? Ha! here comes the wind; thank you, polite Boreas.”

He raised his Spanish hat—for he, too, was dressed in the costume of Spain—and bowed; the wind filled in the *Black Jaguar*’s sails, and, heeling over, she cut through the water at a tremendous rate.

“If he can catch us now, he is welcome,” cried Ira.

“He will catch us,” replied his captain; “the days of the *Black Jaguar* are numbered. There is his signal gun.”

“I will answer with another. We can bounce as well as he does.”

The captain of the *Jaguar* smiled faintly, but as soon as he was left alone sighed heavily.

“A race and a fight between outcast and outcast,” he said. “How will it end? But why do I ask? Is it not written, and has it not been proclaimed to me?”

The bow gun of the *Belvedere* now sent a shot spinning over the sea; but it dropped



about three hundred yards short of the Black Jaguar. Ira Staines laughed contemptuously.

"He will only check his way," he said. "Better save his powder and shot."

"Would that it had killed me, Ira."

"Be a man, and fight."

"I should be more than devil to fire a shot at him."

"I do not understand you."

"I have wronged him too much already, Ira. My soul is double-dyed—stained beyond all hope."

"Go down below and leave the ship to me. Have some wine."

"Aye, wine, wine!" cried the captain. "Wine that sends the blood through the veins and makes us forget all that is past, and brings no vision of the future. But I will drink. Lapita!"

A boy responded to the call, and was bidden to bring some wine. He hurried away, and speedily returned with a flask and two goblets.

"Drink with me, Ira," said the captain, filling up.

"That I will with pleasure," muttered the mate. "Here's confusion to the Belvedere."

Boom!

"Another gun from the chaser," said a man close by; "and well aimed—straight as an arrow, but a little short."

"He has gained a little on us," said Ira Staines, the mate, "or he has put in more powder; that shot was nearer."

"He has gained, I tell you," muttered the captain. "The Black Jaguar is doomed and so am I."

"Drink," said Ira, filling his goblet again.

Boom! crash!

A shower of splinters rose in the air and fell upon the two men. Ira regarded them with momentary wonder. The captain laughed horribly.

"He gains, indeed."

"Who is at that gun?" growled Ira. "Lapita, give me that glass. Now take your head out of the way and let me see. Ah! a tall youth, with the figure of a Hercules and the face of an Apollo. There can be but one man on board like that—Handsome Harry himself. I say, captain!"

"Well?"

"Let us slew around and have a shot at this fellow."

"No—straight on."

"I have a good mind to put it to the men, and see what they will do."

"Ha, do you rebel?" cried the captain, putting a hand upon his sword. "Have you forgotten who is master here?"

Fire flashed from his eyes, and irresistible command was in his look and attitude. Ira fell back into obedience.

"I beg pardon," he said; "I thought the old spirit had left you."

"No, no—it is still here; but we must not stay for him. Let us run for the headland; we can get through the opening of the breakers, and, once there, defy him. There we may safely do so."

"I think you are right, captain. I will take the helm."

The headland was now not more than two miles away, rising majestically out of the sea against a clear blue sky. In front of this, stretching from north to south, was what appeared to be one unbroken line of breakers. Between the breakers and the land was about half a mile of comparatively still water—a harbor of refuge for an untold number of ships, if they could only get there.

One way, and one way only, was there open, and this was known to few. The men of the Black Jaguar were well acquainted with it; that line of black rocks, on which the waves broke so angrily, had long been their shield and fortress.

Only a very experienced and quick eye could have detected the small opening of the line of breakers through which the Black Jaguar hoped to pass; but Ira Staines knew to a hair where to steer, and if the enemy gained no further, he and those on board would escape.

Nearer and nearer to the breakers—five minutes would decide the point.

"Boom! crash!"

"Bother those splinters!" growled Ira, shaking himself as two or three pierced the skin of his back. "That fellow aims to a hair."



"Hurrah! hurrah!" came faintly toward him from the Belvedere, and, taking off his cap, he waved it defiantly in reply.

The captain tossed the wine down his throat like water, and remained with his face toward the Belvedere.

"All right, captain," cried Ira cheerfully; "we shall do them. If they follow us any nearer they must run into the breakers."

"And we, Ira?"

"Are dead on to the gap; it is not a hundred yards ahead. Stand in the chains there, one of you."

The men rushed to the sides and looked over at the seething water around. The Black Jaguar was in the gap, and in another moment would be safe, when—

"Boom! crash!"

Away went the helm of the Black Jaguar to splinters, and, slewing round, she struck heavily upon the rocks, and huge breakers dashed over her.

"My dream is true!" yelled the captain. "The Black Jaguar is lost!"

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE END OF THE BLACK JAGUAR.

On board the Belvedere the captain of the crew was hailed with cheers. Handsome Harry, whose keen eye had set the gun, uttered a cry of exultation and sprang into the fore-rigging to watch the further result. In his eagerness he had forgotten his own ship, but he had Tom True on board, who shouted out for all hands to shorten sail and drop the anchor. This was done just in time, and the Fighting Belvedere pulled up almost on the verge of the breakers.

A cable was run out fore and aft to keep her broadside on to the enemy, whose position now was doubly perilous. One shot from the Belvedere would have settled the Black Jaguar without further delay.

But our hero was not the man to fire upon an enemy in chains, and he gave orders that not a shot should be fired.

"Let him drown like a dog!" he cried; "it is a fitting fate."

"They are getting a boat out, sir," said Bill Grunt.

"Fire on that," replied Handsome Harry, "if they get beyond the breakers."

But the boat never got beyond except in fragments. As soon as it was dropped into the sea it was dashed to pieces. Several pirates fell overboard with it, and were borne away dead.

Those on the Belvedere had nothing now to do but to play the part of spectators, and a keenly interesting spectacle lay before them.

The helpless craft ahead was fixed firmly upon a pointed rock, with its stern sloping toward the Belvedere. Its deck could therefore be plainly seen between the break of the waves upon her.

And what a scene it was! Captain, officers and men all clustered in the fore-castle clinging to every fixed object and to each other. The boat they had attempted to launch was the only one left to them—the others had been swept away by the furious sea.

The guns were overturned and lay upon their sides, only held in their places by the stay-ropes; and every object not secured in any way had been swept over the side.

The masts creaked and groaned, and threatened each moment to go over into the sea.

"I don't give her two minutes more," said Bill Grunt, "and then she will part amidships."

"Part amidships," said Ching-Ching, near him—"what dat, Massa Grunt?"

"Don't you ax me no questions, and then you won't hear no lies," replied the boat-swain. "I don't want to have nothing to say to you."

"But you so clever, dat's why I ask you," said Ching-Ching, insinuatingly—"so much more clever dan all board ship. Even Massa Capen big fool compared to Massa Grunt. I hear de capen say so hisself."

"Since you are so darned polite," said Bill Grunt, mollified, in spite of himself, "parting amidships means breaking in the middle."

"Oh, tank you, tank you," replied Ching-Ching, wriggling about in an excess of



gratitude; "Massa Grunt so berry polite. He's quite a Lord Chilblain."

"I suppose you mean Lord Chamberlain," said Tom True.

"Oh, tank you, tank you!" cried Ching-Ching, again wriggling at Tom; "eberybody so kind to Ching-Ching since him so berry ill."

What rejoinder he might have received to this we cannot say, for it was never uttered. All attention was now turned to the Black Jaguar, which gave out signs of parting.

"There she goes!" cried all.

With a crash, which rose high above the roar of the breakers, the vessel parted in twain, the stern slipping down into the sea on the Belvedere side of the wreck, and the bow plunging over on the shore side.

A chorus of oaths and execrations filled the air. Then came shouts of agony, with quick gasps of the drowning, and the white-surfaced breakers rolled on.

"All gone!" cried Tom.

"No," cried Harry; "a head—another, and another! Some will escape us yet. To the boats!"

"What can boats do in such a sea as this?" asked Tom.

"True—true," said Harry; "but see there

—that head and face! 'Tis he—and I am robbed of my vengeance!"

"And there's that bland mate of his," said Tom, "with the face of a cherub and the heart of a devil—good swimmers, both."

"They will escape us," groaned Harry.

"And some score or so of the crew beside," said Tom.

"They may go," rejoined our hero, "as common malefactors. I leave the usual authorities to deal with them. But he is my prey—my lawful prey."

He dropped down upon the deck, and paced to and fro in agitation. Tom said not a word, thinking he would only make matters worse. Ching-Ching, however, was not so discreet.

"Massa Capen much injured man," he said. "Him so brave, so berry—"

"Get out of my way," cried Harry, seizing him by the arm and jerking him away.

Ching-Ching went off spinning like a teetotum, and twisting his umbrella about until it came in contact with Bill Grunt's nose. Then the boatswain pounced upon him, and sent him spinning the other way over the deck until he came to the hatchway, down which he plunged head first into the arms of Samson, who was just coming up.

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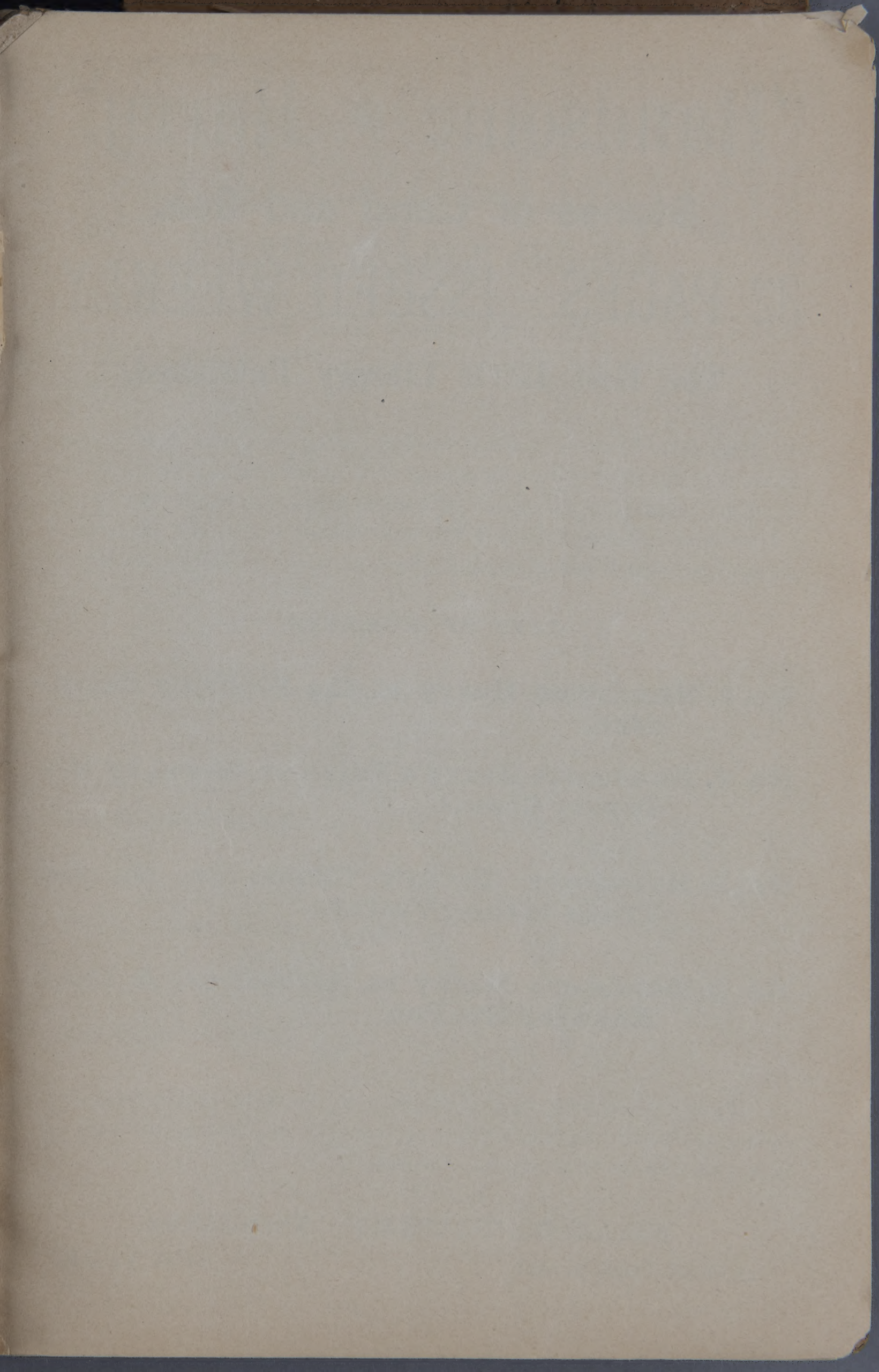
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